



Philip Kerr interviews Kieran Donaghy on the role of film in language teaching.

Kieran, many thanks, first of all, for agreeing to be interviewed. You won a British Council ELTon award for your website, Film English <http://film-english.com/>, which gets over 80,000 visitors a month. The site offers a large selection of video links (I really like your choice of short films!) and lesson plans. You say that you want to promote innovative and creative use of film in English language teaching and learning, along with cineliteracy, the ability to analyse moving images. Could you tell us a little more about cineliteracy and why you think it is important?

The advent of the digital revolution and the Internet, the proliferation of mobile devices which allow us to capture moving images more easily and proficiently, the introduction of inexpensive and user-friendly editing tools, and the emergence of distribution sites such as YouTube and Vimeo, have changed the way that moving images relate to society and education forever. We are living in the age of the image in the world of the screen. The image, and especially the moving image, has taken over whether we like it or not, for better or worse. We are saturated with and bombarded by moving images. So much in our society is communicated visually even subliminally. We have to realise that this visual way of communicating is a very powerful tool, and that we need to understand how emotions, ideas and values are communicated visually. Students need to be taught the language of images if they are to be considered literate in our 21st century society. To participate fully in a democratic society means to be as confident in the use and understanding of moving images as of the printed text. One definition of literacy in the 21st century is "the ability to participate fully in society". Both film literacy or cineliteracy and text literacy are essential aspects of literacy in the 21st Century, they are not mutually exclusive. Cineliteracy or film education is helping people look more closely at film, watching a wider range of film and, if they want to, to make films for themselves. We teach young people to read and write so that they can participate fully in society and it should be the same with film education. Cineliteracy is about actively watching films, possibly making films, being involved in active learning and goes beyond passively watching films.

Critical thinking skills are a relatively recent addition to what language teachers are expected to incorporate in the syllabus. Digital literacy and cineliteracy are aspects of this broader area. For teachers looking for practical help in approaching digital literacy, there is 'Digital Literacies' by Gavin Dudeney, Nicky Hockly and Mark Pegrum (Pearson, 2013), which I think is very good. There are also a series of videoed talks by Nicky Hockly at the British Council / BBC's 'Teaching English' website: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/nicky-hockly-digital-literacies-part-1> For cineliteracy, there is your own website, but is there anywhere else that

teachers can turn? Your own site offers great materials, but, it seems to me, that most are most suitable for students at university (which is your own work context) or of that age. Is there anything out there for teachers working with primary or lower secondary classes?

Most of my lessons at Film English are aimed at mature teenage and adult students, but there are quite a few which can be used with younger learners. *Amar* is a short film about the life of a 14 year old Indian boy. Students practise talking about their present and past daily routines, and compare their routines with those of the boy featured in the film. It works very well with younger learners and encourages them to think critically.

<http://film-english.com/2012/07/08/amar/>

Grateful 365 is a project in which students use their mobile phones to make a one-second video of something they're grateful for in their life for a month. Teachers from all over the world have told me it's worked really well with their younger learners.

<http://film-english.com/2014/01/07/365-grateful/>

A lot of the lessons at Film English deal with topics such as racism, sexism, bullying, consumerism and bullying which are not the types of topics normally covered in traditional course books as the publishers consider them to risky. However, these contemporary topics can really engage and motivate younger learners as they relate to their lives.

The best guide that I know of for helping teachers understand the importance of film in language teaching and giving advice on how to use film critically and creatively with language learners of all ages is [Using Film to Teach Languages](#) by Carmen Herrero and Deborah Chan of Manchester Metropolitan University.

For teachers interested in getting their young students making films, there are excellent film-making guides at Film Club:

<http://www.filmclub.org/resources/#id/25>

Film Club is a UK charity which promotes film education; there are over 7,000 film clubs in schools throughout the UK which reach up to 200,000 children and young children a week.

Although there are only Film Clubs in the UK all of their film guides and other resources are free to download from their website and can be used in the ELT classroom with younger learners.

<http://www.filmclub.org/resources/>

There are some excellent resources which help younger learners describe films and write film reviews:

<http://www.filmclub.org/assets/pdf/FILMCLUB-Review-Tips.pdf>

Film Education is another UK charity which promotes and supports the use of film within the curriculum. There are excellent resources for both [primary](#) and [secondary](#) school students. Unfortunately, Film Education as an organisation is now defunct but the resources remain online although no new resources will be added. It's been replaced by [The Film Space](#) which seeks to encourage and build an understanding and appreciation of the moving images amongst children and young people. A lot of the resources from Film Education have been reincorporated onto the site, but new resources are added regularly.

Thanks for such a full answer! If you don't mind, I'd like to ask you about something rather different. You are also the founder of 'The Image Conference', the only conference in the world focusing exclusively on the use of film, video, images and gaming in English Language Teaching <http://theimageconference.org/> . Could you tell us a little more about this, please?

Although we're living in a visual society in which images are increasingly important in the lives' of our learners, I felt this wasn't reflected in the content of ELT conferences so I decided to set up The Image Conference to try to put media and images in all their different forms at the centre of the language learning agenda. It's an innovative and collaborative project which seeks to explore the possibilities which film, video, images and video games offer to both language teachers and language learners.

The rationale behind The Image Conference is that today we are saturated with visual stimulation and that the visual image has taken over. In the twenty-first century, the ability to interpret, analyse and create images is an integral part of literacy. The aim of The Image Conference is to put images at the centre of the language learning agenda and offer guidance on using images critically and creatively in language teaching in the age of the Internet. The Image Conference brings together leading experts and practitioners in the use of images in language learning such as Jamie Keddie, Ben Goldstein, Lindsay Clandfield, Graham Stanley, Ceri Jones and Kyle Mawer who share their experiences, insights and know-how and provides participants with an excellent opportunity to enhance their competence in the innovative and creative use of images

The first edition of the conference was organised by [UAB Idiomes](#), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the school where I work, in conjunction with the [IATEFL Learning Technologies](#) SIG. The second edition was held in Brasilia, Brazil in conjunction with [BRAZ-TESOL](#). It is held in a different city every year.